

YOUR MONEY Hoffa hones his message

Would-be leader of Teamsters comes to Central New Jersey to talk of unity to the rank and file.

PAGE C1



SPORTS Sister-sister show on the lanes

Linden's Dorin sisters share an incredible skill and passion for bowling on the PWBA Tour.

PAGE D1



LOCAL

Hands-on work for the summer

Faced with a shrinking pool of qualified repair technicians, some area auto dealers are offering internships to train mechanics.

PAGE B1

HOME NEWS TRIBUNE

Y 14, 1998

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EPA vouches for site's soil

By JONATHAN SCHUPPE
STAFF WRITER

If anything's sickened workers at a Middlesex Water Co. construction site in Edison, it probably wasn't in the soil, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says.

"The EPA reported yesterday it did not find 'detectable levels' of most of the 200 chemicals it searched for in the soil of the Fairview Avenue site, where laborers have complained of

Yellow-tongue investigation continues at Middlesex Water construction spot

nausea, fatigue and a yellowing of their tongues.

A few substances — some metals and naturally occurring "essential oils" — turned up in trace, safe amounts, the agency said.

Federal health authorities began investigating the site in February, after workers complained that the symptoms arose after excavation of

30-foot holes. The digging was immediately followed by a strong, foul odor, the workers said.

One essential oil found in the soil, sassafras, could have been the source of that smell, EPA spokeswoman Mary Mears said.

"The results of the soil sampling are very encouraging," EPA Regional Director

Jeanne Fox said in a statement. "They indicate that the soil on the site is not contaminated and it is not likely that the symptoms reported by workers are caused by chemical contamination from the site."

"However," Fox added, "we want to be certain, so we have asked federal, state and local health officials to review and

assess the data."

The EPA's air tests and some soil tests have not been completed, Mears added. The agency will schedule a public hearing with the U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration, the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Diseases Registry and other federal agencies for early next week, she said.

Health officials noted that, while the EPA findings suggested no public health danger, no one's found what causes the yellow tongues. In

See **Soil**, Page A2

SMOKE SCREEN

Tobacco tax fund for kids held back

By RALPH SIEGEL
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRENTON — When smokers were told in the winter that Gov. Christie Whitman was doubling their taxes, two good causes were cited: school buildings and poor kids who need doctors.

But in the first six months of 1998, and in the budget for the 1998-1999 fiscal year that began July 1, half the money raised for these two new programs is not being spent.

Republican lawmakers who helped hammer out a tobacco-tax deal said they are not worried because the development of the programs has been delayed and the money is held in reserve until needed.

But Sen. Richard J. Codey, D-Essex, is less forgiving. He claims Whitman is using a budget trick to get her hands on more cash for other purposes.

"I don't accept it for a second. It is Whitman's sleight of hand," Codey said.

Codey, the Democratic minority leader in the Senate, helped corral his members to vote "yes" on the tax in December in part because of the new programs.

When the cigarette tax was raised to 80 cents a pack, up from 40 cents, most of the increase was to be used to help hospitals pay for the charity-care treatment they provide to people without health insurance.

Charity care was to get the bulk of the new taxes, but there were two new, headline-grabbing programs proposed with the added tobacco tax revenue as well:

■ KidCare subsidized health insurance to provide free or low-cost coverage to 102,000 children of the working poor.

■ A \$50 million annual school facilities fund to help districts build or pay building debts.

The higher tax was forecast in December to bring in an extra \$205 million a year, which is now revised to \$183 million.

For the first 18 months of KidCare, \$71.5 million was designated, and \$75 million was in place for school facilities for the first 18 months.

As it turns out six months later, of that \$146.5 million total, at least \$79 million was

See **Tax**, Page A3

VICTIM GIVES INFO

Phone tips lead police to suspect in sex assault

By ANNA FARNESKI
STAFF WRITER

Police arrested an 84-year-old Hillsborough man yesterday and charged him with abducting and sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl during the weekend.

They credited two anonymous telephone calls about the suspect and a detailed description provided by the victim for the arrest.

Jack Weinstein, who lived a mile from the spot where the girl was attacked, was arrested without incident at the Piedmont Path home he shared with his family yesterday afternoon.

He admitted to giving a young girl a ride and kissing her, according to court documents. But authorities allege that Weinstein forced the girl into his vehicle at gunpoint Sunday afternoon in broad daylight, drove her to the nearby Amsterdam Elementary School, sexually assaulted her and then released her on Hillsborough Road.

"As far as I knew he was just a nice old man," said neighbor Daniel Puia yesterday, as police processed the grandfather at police headquarters.

Weinstein was in Somerset County Jail last night, his bail set at \$50,000 cash.

Court papers and information released yesterday by law-enforcement officials shed light on the girl's ordeal.

PCBs may be tainting lake's fish



KEITH A. MUCCILLI/Staff photographer

● Nick White of South Plainfield, fishing at Spring Lake Park yesterday, says he always throws fish back because of the risk of toxins.

By SARAH GREENBLATT
STAFF WRITER

Fish caught in Spring Lake in South Plainfield are likely to be contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls and should not be consumed,

SOUTH PLAINFIELD

PCBs, which have been tied to disorders of the liver and immune system and

are suspected of causing cancer, have been found in all native species of fish that live in the lake, county Public Health Director Bernard Mihalko said yesterday.

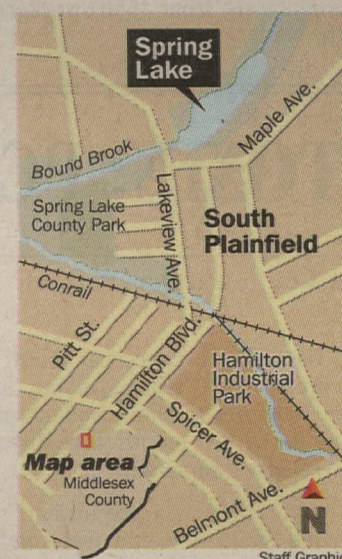
"I wouldn't recommend eating any fish out of there," Mihalko said. He added that the state Department of Environmental Protection, which has the authority to issue a fishing advisory, has not yet done so.

State Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman Loretta

O'Donnell said the agency cannot issue an advisory until a final report on contamination emanating from the Hamilton Industrial Park, about a mile south of the lake, has been released by federal officials.

Officials from the federal Environmental Protection Agency said that while the report will not be complete until next month, the DEP was advised in February of results of fish sampling completed last year at the lake.

See **Toxin**, Page A2



Staff Graphic

CRASH

■ Continued from Page A1

into the victim's car.

Corriero was charged with drunken driving, underaged drinking and disregarding a stop sign.

Classmates said they will remember Reitz, who in September would have been a senior at the high school, for his lively sense of humor and his passion for art and music.

Recalling that Reitz had "more talent than anyone I know," Jennifer Medutis said her classmate's drawings and paintings were on display continually in the high school hallways and he learned to play songs on his guitar after listening to just a few chords of recorded music.

Medutis said Reitz was a perceptive mimic, who often imitated teachers and friends.

Reitz was a member of the school's German and art clubs and he had been on the honor roll.

Having recently received his driver's license and the gift of a Buick Regal from his family, Reitz had proudly offered to chauffeur his friends around, Medutis said.

The boys were on their way home after visiting friends when the accident occurred, she said.

Basile and Nielson remain at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, where their conditions are listed respectively as satisfactory and critical.

Basile suffered a broken rib and a punctured lung in the accident, his mother, Kathy Basile said.

Kathy Basile said her son is not yet aware of her friend's death, since doctors have stressed the need for him to remain calm.

"I don't know what this is going to do to him," she said. "He's a very sensitive young man."

Additional information was not available yesterday on Nielson, who is a student at J.P. Stevens High School in Edison.

Officials at South Plainfield High School said counseling is available to students and that some pupils already have sought help.

Teacher Steve Novak said he has fielded several calls at home from distraught students.

Services for Reitz will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday at McCriskin Home for Funerals on Plainfield Avenue. Interment will follow in Hillside Cemetery, Scotch Plains. Visiting is at the funeral home from 2 to 4 p.m. or 7 to 9 p.m. tomorrow.

Reitz' family requested memorial donations be made to the Middlesex County Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Edison.

SOIL: Clean bill of health from EPA

■ Continued from Page A1

recent weeks, residents have complained of the condition.

"Do we know what it is? No," said Bruce Ohlendorf, occupational health coordinator for the Middlesex County Department of Public Health. "But we can say more assuredly what it isn't: (chemicals that cause) the overwhelming majority of public health risks."

Residents who live near the construction site, where Middlesex Water is in the midst of a two-year, \$30 million expansion of a treatment plant, said cautiously that the EPA's report was good news.

"My only question is: What's causing it," said Pat DiPasquale, whose tongue has turned yellow. "There's got to be something that's causing it."

"It's one of those things that are going to remain a mystery," said Mike Buzzelli.

Union leaders reached yesterday said they hadn't heard any new complaints from their workers at the site.

OSHA, which first responded to the site in February, has said that its air and soil tests for contaminants haven't turned up any evidence of a public health hazard.

And the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which interviewed several yellow-tongued union workers a week after they walked the site last month, told their general contractor it found "no evidence of occupational or environmental exposure."

Dr. Howard Kipen, director of the division of occupational health at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, has said he confirmed three cases of yellow tongue. Nothing wrong was found in two of them, but the other's case is "abnormal" and has not been diagnosed, Kipen said earlier this month.

Kipen could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Most of the dozens of union workers who left the site in June returned a week later, saying they had no evidence that their health was at risk. Their supervisor, RAC General Contractors Inc., promised to cease excavation until tests were

completed.

Middlesex Water Co.'s president, J. Richard Tompkins, said yesterday that excavation had resumed last week, in response to the NIOSH announcement. Construction has resumed normally, he said.

"We're pleased that (the EPA) confirmed the initial testing we had done that found no contamination on the site," Tompkins said.

According to Mears, the EPA has no plans to investigate Camp Kilmer, the former Army base that lies to the immediate north of the construction site. Any contaminants from the camp would have shown up in the air and soil at Middlesex Water, she said.

The EPA's tests found low levels of chromium, a common metal that can be associated with yellow tongues. And Mears said the agency is awaiting tests on five chemicals, including bromine, which experts have said also can lead to yellowing of the tongue.

The remaining tests will be completed at the end of July, Mears said.

TOXIN: PCBs in fish

■ Continued from Page A1

Because of concerns about the contaminated fish, Mihalko said, participants in the borough's fishing derby last month were directed to release their catch.

"We did it as a precaution," Mihalko said. "I would feel comfortable having that precaution in effect."

While the federal Food and Drug Administration sets a safe limit for PCBs in fish at 2 parts per million, one of 11 fish sampled contained 2.6 ppm. Of 11 carp, bass, sunfish and suckers sampled from the lake, all contained some PCBs, said Eric Wilson, who is coordinating the EPA investigation.

The tainted fish were discovered during an investigation of contamination thought to be coming from the industrial park, which has been targeted for cleanup under the Superfund program.

Hazardous levels of PCBs have been found in soils and buildings at the industrial park, which formerly was operated by Cornell-Dubilier Electronics.

The oily chemical also has been found in the sediments of the Bound Brook, which traverses the industrial park, and in fish taken from New Market Pond in Piscataway, which is downstream from the site.

EPA site coordinator Eric Wilson said, however, that the PCB contamination found in fish from Spring Lake is unlikely to have come from the industrial park property.

While Spring Lake is part of the Bound Brook drainage system, Wilson said, the water body is upstream from the industrial park.

"It appears that there could be other sources of PCB contamination in the Bound Brook," Wilson said. "I don't know of a mechanism that would account for the transport of contaminants to Spring Lake."

He said fish from the lake were tested in the belief that they would be free of contamination from the industrial park and could provide information on background levels of PCBs in the environment. PCBs were not found in lake water or sediment, he added.

Last year, the DEP issued an advisory against fishing in New Market Pond, where PCB-laden fish also had been discovered as part of the EPA investigation.

Carp taken from the pond that contained PCB levels as high as 36 ppm did not substantially increase the risk of cancer, DEP officials said. Eating one meal of contaminated fish every week for five years would increase the risk of cancer for one in 1,000 people, they said.

ARREST

■ Continued from Page A1

police with a nearly perfect license plate number, a description of the man's light-blue Buick sedan and of him, down to a scar on his leg.

She then ran to a home on Beverly Drive and approached a resident.

Somerset County Prosecutor Wayne J. Forrest said he does not believe that Weinstein is connected to the spate of recent attempted abductions in recent months elsewhere in Hillsborough, as well as Bound Brook, Bridgewater and Montgomery.

Forrest said police received the anonymous tips yesterday morning, after news of the attack spread in local newspapers. The tipsters fingered Weinstein as a suspect. He resides on 8 Piedmont Path with his son, daughter-in-law and two pre-teen granddaughters. They could not be reached for comment yesterday.

According to court documents, police noticed some of the items the victim mentioned in Weinstein's 1992 Buick, and the elderly man waived his legal rights and said he gave a woman a ride and kissed and grabbed her. Weinstein's son reportedly told police Weinstein has a scar on his leg from a cardiac bypass operation.

Normal average.....1.4	Low temp. today.....2.15(1977)	Precipitation.....2.15(1977)
High this month.....88(July 5)	High temp. today.....99(1904)	Low temp. today.....51(1904)
Low this month.....55(July 11)	Low temp. today.....51(1904)	Precip. today.....2.40 (1960)
Precipitation:		
Yesterday.....0.00"	Information provided by Rutgers Meteorology Department, Cook College	

WEATHER ELSEWHERE Today's high/low & weather conditions											
NATION	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W	WORLD	Hi	Lo	W	
Anchorage	68	51	pc	Milwaukee	90	67	s	Barbados	85	75	pc
Atlanta	84	72	t	Minneapolis	94	72	s	Beijing	90	79	s
Baltimore	90	68	pc	Nashville	84	72	t	Bermuda	85	79	r
Billings	92	66	s	New Orleans	91	75	t	Frankfurt	71	50	pc
Boston	87	69	pc	Norfolk	86	73	s	Jerusalem	90	61	s
Buffalo	88	68	s	Orlando	88	77	t	Johannesburg	66	40	s
Chicago	90	70	s	Phoenix	114	88	s	London	64	50	c
Cincinnati	88	68	pc	Pittsburgh	90	67	s	Mexico City	80	58	sh
Cleveland	90	66	s	Reno	94	54	s	Montreal	84	67	pc
Dallas	98	73	s	St. Louis	90	71	pc	Moscow	86	64	s
Denver	96	64	s	San Antonio	102	77	pc	New Delhi	93	83	r
Detroit	90	68	s	San Diego	78	67	s	Paris	68	48	sh
Honolulu	84	74	pc	San Francisco	70	54	s	Rio de Janeiro	69	59	pc
Houston	96	76	pc	Seattle	68	56	sh	Riyadh	108	88	s
Indianapolis	90	68	pc	Tampa	88	77	t	Rome	84	63	s
Los Angeles	88	66	s	Tucson	106	76	s	San Juan	89	75	pc
Miami	90	78	t	Washington	90	70	s	Tokyo	77	68	pc

Weather (W): s-sunny; pc-partly cloudy; c-cloudy; sh-showers; t-thunderstorms; r-rain; sf-snow flurries; sn-snow; i-ice.

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straight: \$269;
box: \$44.50;
pairs: \$26.50
PICK-4: 3275;
straight:
\$2,155.50; box:
\$89.50
CASH-5: 9, 11,
18, 33, 36; five
of five: \$62,551;
four: \$584;
three: \$12
PICK-6: 5, 8, 14,
15, 17, 46;
bonus: 67816

NY

DAILY: 825
WIN-4: 5752
PICK-10: 7, 10,
11, 14, 15, 16,
21, 24, 25, 30,
32, 34, 38, 54,
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71, 76
TAKE-5: N.A.

PA

DAILY: 096
BIG-4: 5138
CASH-5: 3, 17,
28, 34, 37